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ABSTRACT

This paper from the Bureau of Labor Statistics provides information on current status and historical trends in the employment of Hispanic women. Some of the findings include the following: (1) the Hispanic women's population increased by 52 percent from 1990-1999, compared with 17 percent for black women and 7 percent for white women; (2) 9 percent of the 65 million women in the civilian labor force in 1999 were of Hispanic origin; (3) the female Hispanic labor force is projected to grow from 5.7 million in 1998 to about 8.5 million in 2008; (4) although Hispanic women were concentrated in service jobs, they nearly doubled their employment in the high-paying, highly-skilled management and professional positions between 1990 and 1999; (5) Hispanic women had low median earnings, mostly as a result of their concentration in jobs with lower than average wages; (6) a third of Hispanic women in the labor force lacked a high school diploma and only 15 percent were college graduates; and (7) of all Hispanic families, those maintained by women in 1998 had the lowest median income. (KC)

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Facts on Working Women

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U.S. Department of Labor
Women's Bureau
Irasema T. Garza, Director

A Voice for Working Women Since 1920

No. 00-04
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WOMEN OF HISPANIC ORIGIN[1] IN THE LABOR FORCE

Women of Hispanic origin are one of the fastest growing population groups in the nation. In 1990 there were 7.0 million Hispanic women age 16 years and over in the United States and 11 million by the end of 1999 (**see Table 1**). The largest female Hispanic origin subgroup continues to be women of Mexican origin (6.6 million), followed by women of Puerto Rican origin (1.1 million), and women of Cuban origin (573,000). The remaining 2.6 million were of other Spanish origin.[2]

Table 1
Population of Hispanic Origin Women 16 Years and Older, 1990 and 1999
(numbers in thousands)

Women	1990	1999	Numerical Change	Percent Change
All Hispanic Women	7,210	10,937	3,727	51.7
Mexican women	4,248	6,643	2,395	56.4
Puerto Rican women	866	1,112	246	28.4
Cuban women	433	573	140	32.3
Other Spanish origin	1,663	2,609	946	56.9

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings, January 1991 and 2000.

Overall, Hispanic origin women's population increased by 51.7 percent during this time period, compared with 16.9 percent for black women and 7.0 percent for white women.

Puerto Rican and Cuban origin women, age 16 and over, continued to outnumber their male counterparts in 1999, however, the number of Mexican origin women (6.6 million) is slightly less than the number of Mexican origin men (6.9 million). With their steadily growing population, Mexican origin women may outpace Mexican origin men within this decade.

Hispanic origin women, in general, are younger than other female groups. Their median age in November 1998 was 27.1 years; 28.2 years for American Indian women; 31.7 years for black women; 32.3 years for Asian and Pacific Islander women; and 37.6 years for white women.

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LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION -- Of the 64.9 million women in the civilian labor force in 1999, 6.1 million (9 percent) were of Hispanic origin. Projections for the year 2008 predict Hispanic origin women will represent 12 percent of the female labor force.

The labor force participation rate for Mexican origin women was 54.6 percent; 55.0 percent for Puerto Rican origin women; and 50.2 percent for Cuban origin women (**see Table 2**). Mexican and Cuban origin women have participated in the labor force at or above the 50 percent level since the 1980's. Puerto Rican origin women only reached that level in 1997.

Table 2

Employment Status of Hispanic Women,
16 Years of Age and Over, 1999 Annual Averages
(numbers in thousands)

	All Hispanic Women[1]	Mexican Origin Women	Puerto Rican Origin Women	Cuban Origin Women
Civilian noninstitutional population	10,937	6,643	1,112	573
Civilian labor force	6,119	3,630	611	287
Percent of population	55.9	54.6	55.5	50.2
Employed	5,653	3,344	557	273
Unemployed	466	287	54	14
Unemployment rate	7.6	7.9	8.8	4.8
Not in labor force	4,819	3,013	500	285

[1]Includes persons of Central or South American origin and of other Hispanic origin, not shown separately.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, January 2000.

Hispanic origin women continue to have lower participation rates than white and black women (**see Table 3**). When women and men are looked at collectively, however, Hispanics participated at a similar level to whites (67.7 percent as compared to 67.3 percent) and slightly more frequently than blacks (65.8 percent).

Table 3
Labor Force Participation Rates of Women, Selected Years

Women	1985	1990	1995	1999
All Women (total)	54.5	57.5	58.9	60.0
Hispanic	49.4	53.0	52.6	55.9
Mexican	50.4	52.8	51.8	54.6
Puerto Rican	38.2	42.8	47.4	55.0
Cuban	55.2	55.9	50.8	50.2
White	54.1	57.5	59.0	59.6
Black	56.5	57.8	59.5	63.5

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, January 1986, 1991, 1996, and 2000.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics has projected that the female Hispanic labor force will grow from 5.7 million in 1998 to about 8.5 million in 2008. This 48 percent increase will be the largest recorded among all female racial groups (**see Table 4**). The labor force growth of Asian and other women[3] -- at 46 percent -- will closely rival that of Hispanic origin women. These two groups of women have consistently shown the largest labor force increases over the 1978-1988 and 1988-1998 periods. Hispanic origin women's labor force participation rate is projected to be 57.9 percent in 2008, however, they will be the only female group below the 60 percent participation level.

Table 4
Projected Civilian Labor Force and Participation Rates of Women, by Race

Women	In Labor Force (In thousands) 1998	2008	Change, 1998-2008 Numerical	Percent	Participation Rate (percent) 1988	2008
All races	63,714	73,444	9,729	15.3	59.8	61.9
Hispanic origin	**5,746**	**8,552**	**2,806**	**48.8**	**55.6**	**57.9**
White	52,380	59,001	6,621	12.6	59.4	61.5
Black	8,441	10,224	1,783	21.1	62.8	64.6
Asian and other	2,895	4,219	1,323	45.7	59.2	60.5

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1999.

EMPLOYMENT -- Hispanic origin women are one of the fastest growing groups of working women in the United States. Their total employment increased 61 percent -- from 3.5 million in 1990 to 5.6 million in 1999. Of this 5.6 million, 1.4 million were of Mexican origin; 223,000 were of Puerto Rican origin; 55,000 were of Cuban origin; and the remaining 618,000 were of various Central or South American origin. The types of jobs held by Hispanic origin women will be discussed in the *Occupations* section of this report.

In 1999, 210,000 employed Hispanic origin women were *multiple job holders* -- persons that have more than one job. They were, however, less likely to hold more than one job than white and black women --

3.7 percent of Hispanic origin women as compared with 4.8 percent of employed black women and 6.2 percent of white women. In general, women of all racial groups reported that they held multiple jobs out of economic need -- to meet regular household expenses or to pay off debts -- according to data collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Nearly a quarter million (242,000) or 4.3 percent of employed Hispanic origin women were *self-employed* in 1999. Many of these women worked in personal service occupations including child care. Comparable figures for black women were 216,000 or 2.7 percent and 3 million or 5.9 percent for white women.

OCCUPATIONS -- 5.6 million Hispanic origin women were employed in 1999. Occupational employment among working women varies by race, but there are also similarities. All groups show their heaviest concentration in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations (TSAS), however, Hispanic origin and black women were more likely to work in service (SERV) occupations than white women (**see Table 5**). Numerous white women worked in technical, sales, and administrative jobs, but they had a much higher representation in managerial and professional (M&P) jobs than Hispanic origin or black women. Between 1990 and 1999, however, Hispanic origin women nearly doubled their employment in the high-paying, highly-skilled management and professional positions from 516,000 to 1,025,000.

Table 5

Occupational Distribution of Employed Women, 1999

	Total	**Hispanic**	Black	White
Total, 16 years and over (thousands)	62,042	**5,653**	8,029	51,096
Percent	100.0	**100.0**	100.0	100.0
Managerial & professional specialty (M&P)	32.3	**18.1**	24.5	33.4
Technical, sales, admin. support (TSAS)	40.0	**36.8**	38.2	40.6
Service occupations (SERV)	17.4	**26.7**	25.6	16.2
Precision production, craft & repair	2.1	**2.8**	2.1	2.1
Operators, fabricators, & laborers	7.0	**13.6**	9.4	6.5
Farming, forestry, & fishing	1.1	**1.8**	0.2	1.2

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, January 2000

More than half of the ten leading occupations of Hispanic women were *service* occupations, while three were *sales and administrative support* occupations (**see Table 6**). These two occupational groups accounted for nearly two-thirds of total employment for Hispanic origin women. Most sales and service jobs require few skills or training, and generally offer low wages and minimal health benefits.

Table 6

Ten Leading Occupations of Hispanic Origin Women, 1999

Occupations	Number Employed (In thousands)	Median Weekly Earnings[1]
1. Cashiers[2] (TSAS)	279	$275
2. Teachers, excluding post-secondary[2] (M&P)	215	659
3. Secretaries (TSAS)	210	443
4. Sales workers, retail and personal services, excluding cashiers [2] (SERV)	189	296
5. Janitors and cleaners[2] (SERV)	184	293
6. Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants (SERV)	177	318
7. Cleaners and servants, private household (SERV)	170	255
8. Maids (SERV)	158	289
9. Cooks (SERV)	127	279
10. Receptionists[2] (TSAS)	107	373

[1] Median weekly earnings for all women.

[2] Occupation projected to have large job growth through 2008.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unpublished data, Annual Averages 1999 and *Employment and Earnings*, January 2000.

Of the ten leading occupations of Hispanic women, *cashiers; secondary school teachers; retail sales workers; janitors and cleaners; nursing aides; and receptionists* are among the occupations projected to experience a large number of job openings between 1998 and 2008. Large job growth doesn't necessarily parallel with high salaries. Excluding teachers, women (Hispanic and non-Hispanic) employed as full-time wage and salary workers in these occupations had median weekly earnings ranging between $275-$373 in 1999. Hispanic origin women employed as teachers, excluding post-secondary, however, had median weekly earnings of $595. The 1999 median weekly earnings figure for all wage and salary Hispanic origin women workers was only $348.

Most fast growing, high paying occupations require substantial education and skills. Here is a brief list of jobs that are projected to have *fast growth*[4] through 2008 and where women had median weekly earnings greater than $500 in 1999 -- *computer engineers; system analysts; physical and occupational therapists; registered nurses; special education teachers; speech pathologists and audiologists; residential counselors; and securities and financial services sales workers.*

EARNINGS[5] **AND INCOME**[6] -- Hispanic origin women who usually worked full time had median weekly earnings of $348 in 1999 -- 86 percent of what their male counterparts earned ($406); 85 percent of black women ($409); and 72 percent of white women ($483).

One reason for Hispanic origin women's low median earnings is their concentration in jobs with lower than average wages. In administrative support and service jobs where Hispanic women are heavily represented, they earn much lower wages than the median weekly earnings for all women (**see Table 7**).

In 1998 Hispanic origin women who worked year round, full time had median income of $19,817 -- this was 88 percent of what their male counterparts earned ($22,505); 83 percent of black women ($23,864); and 73 percent of white women ($27,304).

Table 7

Usual Weekly Earnings of Employed Full-Time Wage and Salary Hispanic Women, by Selected Occupations, 1999

Occupations	Weekly Earnings (all women)	Weekly Earnings (Hispanic women)
Total (all occupations)	$473	$348
Female dominated sales & administrative occupations		
Sales, retail and personal	296	270
Financial records processing	435	419
Secretaries, stenographers and typists	446	423
Female dominated service occupations		
Private household	240	220
Personal service	310	293
Health service	320	310

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unpublished data, Annual Averages, 1999.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT -- Because education is often a prerequisite for entering higher-paying occupations, Hispanic origin women's earnings are greatly affected by the amount of education they have attained. The largest group of Hispanic origin women age 25 years and over who were labor force participants in 1999 were those with less than a high school diploma -- nearly a third, 31 percent. This helps explain their low median weekly earnings and that they are mostly employed in sales, administrative support, and service jobs. Thirty percent of Hispanic origin women in the labor force (age 25 and over) were high school graduates with no college; 17 percent had some college, but no degree; 7 percent had associate degrees; while 15 percent were college graduates.

Higher educational attainment generally results in higher labor force participation and lower unemployment rates. In 1999 Hispanic origin women who had less than a high school diploma participated in the labor force at a rate of 41.3 percent; 62.5 percent for high school graduates with no college; and 77.9 percent for college graduates. In addition, Hispanic origin women with less than a high school diploma had an unemployment rate of 9.8 percent; 9.5 percent for high school graduates with no college; and 2.6 percent for college graduates.

FAMILIES MAINTAINED BY WOMEN -- These are families with no husband present in the household. There were 1.6 million Hispanic origin families maintained by women in 1998 -- a 50 percent increase since 1988 when they totaled 1.1 million. Women maintained nearly a quarter of all Hispanic families (1,612,000 out of 6,961,000). Nearly 2.4 million children less than 18 years of age lived in Hispanic families maintained by women in March 1998.

Of all family types, those maintained by women had the lowest median income. In 1998 the median income for Hispanic families maintained by women, with no husband present was only $16,532; for Hispanic families with a male householder, no wife present, $29,227; and for married-couple Hispanic families, $34,816.

Foot Notes

1. Hispanic origin refers to all persons who identify themselves as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central American, or other Hispanic origin. Persons of Hispanic origin can be of any race.

2. Includes persons of Central or South American and of other Hispanic origin.

3. The "Asian and other" group includes (1) Asians and Pacific Islanders and (2) American Indians and Alaska Natives.

4. Any job where total employment is expected to increase from 21to 35 percent between 1998 and 2008.

5. Earnings represent wages before taxes and other deductions, and included any overtime pay, commissions, or tips usually received (at the main job in the case of multiple job holders).

6. Income is the amounts received from wages and salaries, self-employment income (including losses), Social Security, supplemental security income, public assistance, interest, dividends, rent, royalties, estates, trusts, veteran's payments, unemployment and worker's compensation, retirement pensions and disability benefits, alimony, child support, educational assistance, and financial assistance from outside of the household, and other periodic income.

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